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Perchlorate panel discusses toxicity of contaminant

Discussion of the toxicity of perchlorate dominated the first meeting of a federal steering committee established to serve as a forum for coordinating, reviewing and communicating toxicology, occurrence, detection and treatment developments for the emerging drinking water contaminant.

The Jan. 13 meeting came just weeks after the Southern Nevada Water Authority reported increased perchlorate levels attributed to seasonal turnover of its Lake Mead supply. The levels neared EPA's provisional drinking water criteria level of 18 micrograms/L, reaching 16 micrograms/L at the SNWA intake and 14 micrograms/L in treated water.

The panel noted that results from eight high-priority toxicology projects initiated following a May 1997 expert panel are expected to be available by October, although some data may be available as early as this month. The steering committee also established several subcommittees to help prepare a report to Congress on perchlorate. USAF officials have slated an April 1 meeting in Salt Lake City to gather additional input.

On the MTBE front, meanwhile, California's East Bay Municipal Utility District this week decided to spend \$420,000 to replace MTBE-polluting two-stroke gasoline engines on 151 boats used by the district and its concessionaires on three EBMUD reservoirs with cleaner four-stroke engines. EBMUD is also considering an outright ban on two-stroke boat engines.

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